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Editorial

It is not supposed to be like this, the *fin de siècle* should be characterized by world-weariness and despair. Instead, despite a milksop manifesto of the "radical centre," there is a feeling of optimism abroad in the wake of the Labour Party's victory. There have already been some good moves. Robin Cook, the foreign secretary, has announced our intention to rejoin UNESCO. Britain left the organization in 1985 in the train of the United States on the grounds that it was, among other things, wasteful and overpoliticized and had plans which posed a threat to press freedom in the Third World. However, the organization has undergone reform and, whatever shortcomings there might have been at the top, my experience of its work "on the ground" has always been positive. The very swift decision not to return the Elgin marbles may not have gone down well with UNESCO, given its role in the preservation of world heritage sites, although this is a highly complex issue (Benin bronzes, Picasso's Guernica, and the Rosetta Stone have recently also been in the news). Nations do, of course, like to abuse their neighbours verbally – French letter, *capote anglaise*... – but, when my old Harrap's informs me that *elginisme* means the "removal from site of architectural or artistic treasures (to put in museum or private collection)," it is decidedly a case of the Gallic pot calling the English kettle black: André Malraux, minister of culture for 11

years under de Gaulle, was sentenced to prison in Cambodia in 1924 for stealing statuary from the temple of Banteay Srei.

On a highly personal note, I am pleased that Jack Cunningham, who has never impressed me, has been moved from his shadow Heritage brief to MAFF, and I would have been pleased if Mark Fisher, responsible for drafting many of the Labour Party arts policy documents, had got the top job. As it is, Chris Smith, considered something of a heavyweight – which is all to the good – is the new Secretary of State at National Heritage, and Fisher, as Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Arts, his number two.

Big Bird would have fallen off his perch if Smith had actually uttered the word "puppet." In fact, with the exception of film, he has not, so far as I am aware, addressed a specific art form. However, he has said that he wants better use to be made of lottery arts money – "It is now spent on the wrong things, on buildings and not on people." – and expressed his desire for free access to museums and galleries (albeit all *within existing budgets*). His heart is clearly in the right place, we shall just have to wait and see how robust that muscular organ proves to be under the pressure of the market. He has also endeared himself – to me at least – by saying that he will consider replacing "heritage" in the ministry's title, a term which, despite attempts to rehabilitate it,

notably by the recently deceased socialist historian Raphael Samuel, is backward-looking and twee. I see nothing wrong with Ministry of Culture. Also, one cannot imagine Smith, unlike a recent predecessor in what had become a musical-chairs post, thinking Jeanne Moreau was a man, which was the hapless Stephen Dorrell's gaffe when he attended the Cannes Film Festival in 1995 as our cultural flag-bearer and the *femme fatale* of *Jules et Jim* was President of the Jury.

Non-Ex Cathedra Remarks

Ray DaSilva

The first letter I wrote on becoming your chair was to both Peter Charlton and Loretta Howells, expressing a wish for closer liaison between the Guild, the Puppet Centre and BrUNIMA. The response from both has been very warm and a number of collaborative projects are being discussed. These include a joint venture for the Millennium celebrations, a joint site on the Internet (see under *Internet* heading), and the joint publication of a booklet by George Speaight. You will hear more about these and probably other ventures as plans become firm. And just in case anyone is worried about the loss of autonomy etc etc, don't worry, we each have a different focus and serve different interests – there are no plans to amalgamate!

All this activity will have benefits to many puppeteers and puppet enthusiasts, which is the purpose of the organisations in the first place, but it obviously involves a good amount of voluntary work by their respective Officers and Committees.

The BrUNIMA Committee is a happy bunch and working well, nevertheless we are a bit stretched. At our last meeting we were pleased to welcome Cariad Astles, our latest new Committee member, although we still have a couple of vacancies.

So, if anyone out there, you, for example, can spare a bit of time to put something back into the system, do please get in touch with me, or any of our other Officers. In particular, I would welcome an offer to take over the editorship of the four-page newsletter (which appears three times a year between *Bulletins*) or perhaps four people could do a page each with a different focus, similar to the Puppeteers of America's newsletter.

Whilst on the subject of workloads, I would like, on behalf of us all, to express thanks to Robert Fowler, who took on the job of editing our *Bulletin* at almost a moment's notice. This is his second issue, please encourage him by sending your articles and comments (critical or otherwise); letters and illustrations are also welcome.

See you at Norwich. Meanwhile have a good St Simeon's Day!

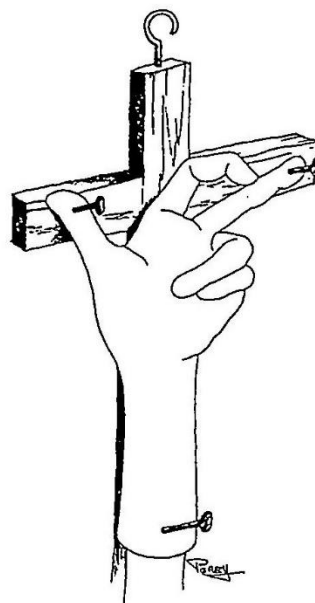
More Politics

Gren and Juliet Middleton received the following postcard earlier this year. "Check this out. All the theatres were closed in Bratislava because they were on strike, and who called them out? – the local puppet theatre, because their director was removed, i.e. there was political interference. Imagine it, Movingstage leads the West End theatres out on indefinite strike cos Virginia Bottomley has sacked Gren. Ee, it's a different world. Lots of love from the Wild East." Loutkář (5/97) adds some detail: "Members of the Nitra Puppet Theatre have been on strike since 6 February in protest against the unfounded dismissal of the director Karol Spišák. The strikers have been joined by the Na rázcestí Puppet Theatre from Banská Bystrica, Anton Anderle's Traditional Puppet Theatre and the Žilina Puppet Theatre."

Much farther east, the puppet theatre in Yoshkar-Ola, capital of the Russian Federation's Mari El Republic, is displaying a never-say-die spirit. Its 20 artists have received no wages since September, but, according to Boris Bronshteyn (*Izvestiya*, 3 6 97), "miss no opportunity to play to the children of vegetable-growers (for cabbages and carrots) or poultry-raisers (for chickens and eggs)." They are even preparing to tour Greece this summer, although it is not clear what they will be paid in. I should perhaps add here that many millions of people, including servicemen, who are employed in the country's federal budget-financed sectors have been without wages for months. The writer also points out that the puppeteers have been located since 1989 in a sumptuous theatre, built thanks to Sergey Obraztsov: "They recall with pleasure here how the prestigious artist Sergey Obraztsov pressed a few Kremlin levers, after which the oblast party committee secretary was summoned to Moscow and ordered to build the theatre." The theatre's chief director, Yekaterina Yardenko, was a pupil of Obraztsov's.

The right-wing newspaper *ABC* has praised Spitting Image for its "impeccable neutrality" while castigating Spain's own latex caricatures, *Noticias de Guignol* (Puppet News), as "crude socialist agitprop." It claims that the puppets, who have a daily 5-minute slot on Canal Plus, regularly lambaste the ruling Popular Party (PP), depicting Prime Minister José Maria Aznar as a platitudinous moron, while giving the Socialists, led by Felipe González, an easy ride. The PP is said to be considering producing a puppet show of its own.

A chilling line from an exchange between puppets of Le Pen and an Arab at the Choucrouterie, a theatre in Strasbourg, in which city – to considerable protest – the National Front held its congress at the end of March: "A Auschwitz, les trains arrivent toujours à l'heure."



The Sacred and the Profane

Reviewing the latest sub-literary exercises in self-exculpation by Pentacostalists Jim Bakker and his former wife, the lovely Tammy (*The New York Review of Books*, 29 5 97), Martin Gardner writes that "Because the Bible School banned student marriages the young newlyweds left to hit the road as traveling soul savers. Jim preached. Tammy played the piano and accordion and sang. In an effort to reach children with the gospel, Jim and Tammy began using puppets. Tammy had a tiny voice for animating Susie Moppet and a deep voice for Allie Alligator." It does not sound terribly sophisticated stuff, but the upshot was that attendance at their Sunday-school meetings tripled and, word of their popularity reaching Pat Robertson, they were invited to do a children's show on his Christian television station. The rest is (TV) history, which involved the "usual" sex scandals and Jim being sentenced to prison for duping followers out of \$158 million via his Praise the Lord (otherwise known as Pass the Loot) club. Puppets would thus seem to have been instrumental in the Bakkers' rise, but not their fall – from grace.

Televangelism is still very much a Transatlantic product, although *The Times* (10 May) did, balefully, reveal that "AN AMERICAN-STYLE 'super church' has

opened in the heart of Britain's burgeoning Bible belt," to wit, Chessington, Surrey, and that other notable evangelical pockets include Guildford and Woking. Heavens above! Thankfully, no mention of puppets. C of E Punch & Judy men of the cloth in St Paul's Church, Covent Garden, is one thing, but....

If you happen to be interested in cribs, *szopki*, *vertepy*... do read "The Art & Politics of the Nativity," by Garry Wills, *The New York Review of Books* (NYRB), 19 12 96, pp 75-82, which is a fascinating and highly informative study of the (regional) history and current state of Italian bethlehems, known as *presepi*. It contains a bibliography of currently available books on the subject.

Lock Up Your Puppets!

Thirty-three of Pat Redmonds' hand-made puppets – 15 Sootys and nine each of Soo and Sweep – disappeared en route to Matthew Corbett in April, threatening the shooting of the next TV series. However, this being a Sooty story, they did eventually turn up.

Three characters from Russia's *Kukly* – President Yeltsin, former Finance Minister Livshits, and ultranationalist Zhirinovskiy – were also kidnapped in April. Each costs the equivalent of £4,000 to make, and ransom demands by phone followed. The producer of NTV's hit show, Vasily Grigoryev, said "We lost five puppets just after we started [1994]. We informed the police, but nothing happened. This time we are going to do things our own way." In an interview in *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, after bemoaning the lax security at Mosfilm – the studio had surplus Yeltsins and Zhirinovskiys but only the one Livshits – Grigoryev said "I'd like to know one thing. What are they going to threaten us with if we don't pay up? Are they going to cut off a puppet's ear. A head?"

Autolycean Trifles or It's a Fortean World

The latest and probably last issue (Issue 1997) of *gesture*, the publication of Puppeteers in New Zealand National Centre for Union Internationale de la Marionnette (PINZ UNIMA), before it combines with Australian UNIMA's publication, contains the following review by Rose Beauchamp of a show called *Vliegen Opera* (*Fly Opera*) from last year's International Micro Festival at Dordrecht, the Netherlands: "The audience of 25 had individual headphones, on which one heard a 'sung text generated by computerised speech synthesis,' and followed the movements of captured 'dying' flies through telescopes trained on a reproduction of a Vermeer print! This minimalist 'heady' Dutch avant-garde performance in a beautiful building failed to hold audience attention, there were only 5 people left at the ending, but was irresistible in its absurdity." A grainy photograph shows two flies stuck on the ends of sticks like kebabs.

I had always imagined the Middletons' Puppet Barge was the only puppet theatre afloat, and it may indeed be the only permanent one, but I should have brought the water-abundant Dutch into the reckoning. That same festival included, for example, the *Bodemloze Put* (The Bottomless Pit), by Ed Bouman and Jan Goes, which was "screened" in the hold of a barge moored in the river.

In a poll conducted shortly before our general election Wallace and Gromit were recognized by 35 percent of the French public (and 57 percent of teenagers), which was more than recognized photographs of John Major. Wonder what the new PM's recognition index is? You may remember my referring a while back to a cartoon of W&G high on cocaine in New York, where they

had been mislaid by Nick Parks. Coincidentally, a recent Hale and Pace sketch called *Reality Street* had puppet-like characters teaching numeracy by lines of coke. Incidentally, Nicholas Wulstan Parks described his CBE for services to the animated film industry as “a Blue Peter badge for grown-ups.”

Kolya, the Oscar-winning film by Jan Svěrák, contains a very short scene in which the young Russian boy of the title plays with a child-size traditional Czech marionette theatre. Of course, the presence of puppets in a film is not necessarily a strong enough incentive to go and see it. I am told, for example, that there are puppets in *GI Blues* and *The Sound of Music*.

The National Coalition of American Nuns has urged consumers to boycott nun dolls (available in the habits of 32 orders) in the Blessings Expression of Faith catalogue while, inconsistently, demanding that any revenue from their sale go to help retired nuns. As far as I am aware, neither Cindy nor Ken has yet commented on this Felliniesque fashion phenomenon.

I may have been unfair to Disney in the past, although Švankmajer would not agree. The Corporation is not so much homey establishment as schizophrenic. It will replace lusty pirates at the Disneyland theme park with, absurdly, more PC swashbucklers (when the automata emerged from refurbishment in March their appetites were now refocused on trays of food rather than maidens*), but will also extend healthcare to the live-in partners of homosexual employees and host Gay and Lesbian Alliance Days at Disney World, including a pink Mickey Mouse, to the indignation of the Floridian moral majority. Admittedly, it is difficult sometimes: the cute, environmentally aware, buckskin-clad heroine of *Pocahontas* was in reality only 11 when she met her future husband.

*Cynthia Graff of the Lindora Medical Clinic in Orange County, California, thinks that the Disney volte-face takes the biscuit: “If what Disney is trying to do is to bring sensitivity to gender issues, well, substituting food as the solution to the problem may present another problem.”

Belly Laugh: Who's the Dummy Now?

“I’ve started so I’ll finish.” In the last issue I mentioned Sir George Gardiner’s remark about John Major being Clarke’s “ventriloquist dummy,” and when I saw a full-page political ad in April with a photomontage of a tiny Tony Blair sitting on a giant Helmut Kohl’s knee, designed to illustrate Labour’s position on Europe, my immediate thought was that the idea had been borrowed from Sir George, a right-winger whom Central Office may have found a confounded nuisance, but whose image had struck home. However, I cannot say I saw Gardiner’s name mentioned in the ensuing “battle” over the intellectual property rights to this idea. Apparently, it was Heseltine’s wheeze, he having dispatched a rough sketch, drawn during a strategy meeting, to M&C Saatchi (the actual use of photomontage for political ends was, of course, pioneered by John Heartfield (Helmut Herzfeld), 1891-1968, who created biting anti-fascist, anti-militarist images). Then I read that it was a straight take on a “famous” *Esquire* front cover by George Lois from the sixties showing Hubert Humphrey, the US Democratic presidential candidate in 1968, sitting in the lap of retiring President Lyndon Johnson. There is also a *Punch* cartoon of Hitler sitting on Himmler’s knee and so on and so forth. Copycat cartoons showing Major on the knee of, depending on your newspaper, Redwood, Portillo or Heseltine, were inevitably spawned.

A propos of the caricature of their chancellor, German officials, already familiar with beer adverts guying their nation, diplomatically alluded to "the English sense of humour," of which the current film *Ridicule* provides a wry, 18th-century, French view. However, there is a limit to the chancellor's sense of humour and he is suing *Penthouse* for publishing an "unacceptable" image of his wife, Hannelore (the complaint had previously been rejected by Germany's Press Council, which ruled that the cartoon was an example of "satire"). Early June, following Eurotravail caused the chancellor by the Bundesbank, *The Observer's* Riddell had Kohl perched on Blair's knee. Enough already!

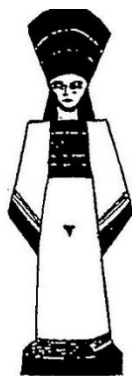
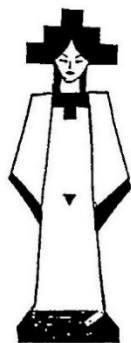
Noticed that *Gudia*, a film by Goutam Ghose, which was shown at Cannes in May, features a ventriloquist, Hameed, a member of an itinerant group, who reluctantly, when he loses his voice through cancer, sells the star attraction of the show, the beautiful, life-sized dummy, Urshavi, to his disciple, Johnny, who returns to his small neighbourhood in suburban Mumbai. A must see?

Fall Guys

Images may be exhibited for all kinds of reasons. The giant effigies of Valencia's Fallas week, in March, some of them as tall as a four-storey building (which a huge number of workshops are engaged in making throughout the year), regularly lampoon politicians. On television, a few months ago, I saw an effigy of Kohl unceremoniously thrown to the ground from a platform by celebrating German miners. Demonstrators in Western Europe are not, of course, always handled with kid-gloves, as the nuclear protesters at Gorleben would testify, but this does not compare with the treatment meted out to an effigy-bearing political protester in Serbia, who was savagely beaten,

imprisoned, and raped, according to press reports. Indeed, it does not do to take images in vain in a good many countries. In Kandahar, where the Taleban have banned television and cinema on the grounds, according to the governor, that "worshipping statues was forbidden by the Prophet Mohammed, and watching television is the same as seeing statues" and "drawing pictures or looking at them is sinful," it would be an unwise man or – even more so – woman who ventured abroad with a puppet. A Taleban commander stated that Afghanistan's greatest treasure, the giant Buddha statues at Bamian, once a caravanserai on the Silk Road, would be razed, although this has been denied by the movement's leadership. Next door, in Shiite Iran (in conflict with the Sunni Taleban), following last year's banning of the sale of Barbie as un-Islamic, the religious authorities have introduced their own Sara and Dara dolls to "counter the cultural invasion of the West." It should not be forgotten, however, that the Islamic world has *always* been diverse: one may associate the art of the Arabs with calligraphy and, of course, the arabesque, but the iconography of Persian and Mogul miniature painting also comes from within Islam. The highly stylized form of Javanese puppets is often attributed to Islamic proscription of the depiction of the human figure. On Bali (where a variety of Hinduism is practised) the leather puppets, which are generally considered older, are more naturalistic.

"... this is no world To play with mamnets...." – *Henry IV*, Part I, Sc iii, l 92. The Arden Shakespeare glosses this as "dolls, from *mawmet*, an idol of Mahomet whom Saracens supposedly worshipped." Webster's defines *maumet/mammet* as "1, *obs*: a false god or idol; 2 *now dial Brit a*: an odd figure: puppet, effigy, image, doll – used also as a generalized term of abuse or contempt; *b*: scarecrow...." Shades of Rushdie.



Having heard Paul Hindemith's *Nusch-Nuschi Dances* on the radio a couple of years ago and appealed in a letter to *Animations* at the time for more information on the Burmese puppetry connection, I was particularly pleased to receive this piece featuring "Carry On Up the Irrawaddy." I have also seen some of the fine Helmut Wurz designs in colour, which this magazine cannot, unfortunately, bring to you. I like the way Peter follows in the footsteps of Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano* in exploiting a foreign-language course for playwriting purposes. No link, so far as I know, between Avenel Castle and Arsenal's Avenell Road football stadium?

***Toy Theatre Symposium,
Stadtbibliothek, Wilhelmspalais,
Charlottenplatz, Stuttgart, 21-23
March 1997
Peter Peasgood***

When we arrived a large selection of the Röhler Toy Theatre collection was already displayed on the several floors of the Stadtbibliothek.

From 2 February there had been performances at this venue and in the district by Invisius (Berlin), Grims Papiere Theater Holland, Papiertheater Severinus (Preetz), Gertruds Papiertheater, and Papiertheater-Guckasten. Two performances of the Hindemith one-act opera *Nusch-Nuschi* would be given by the Hanau Papiertheater during the Symposium.

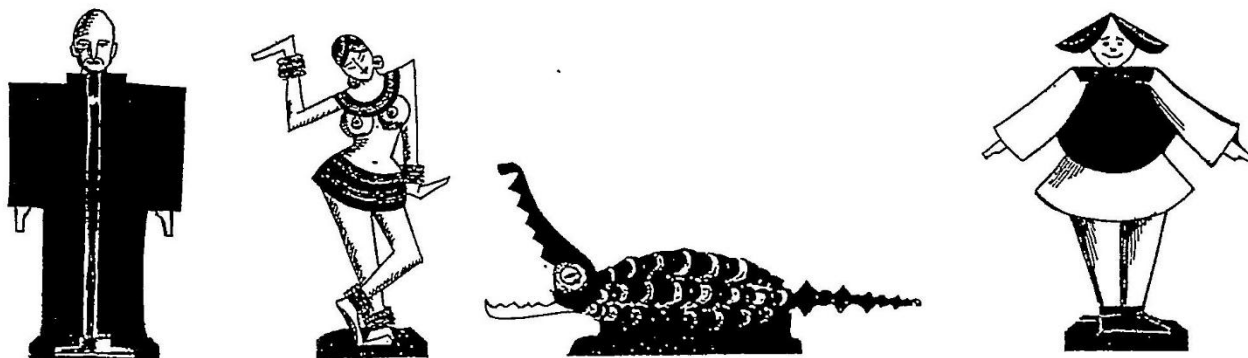
At 1pm familiar faces were gathering, on the ground floor, around Christa Scharmann (of the Stadtbibliothek), who had organized much of the proceedings. Our first event, at 1.45, was to walk in a long crocodile of some 30 delegates to the nearby U-bahn and thence by electric train to Ludwigsburg, a small attractive town north of Stuttgart.

Dietger Dröse of the Hanau Papiertheater purchased runabout tickets for us all and we happily proceeded through Ludwigsburg to the Schlossparks with the intention of examining a uniquely displayed toy theatre collection.

Part of the grounds of Schloss Ludwigsburg is a pleasure garden for children, designed to stimulate as well as to entertain, for example, there was a continuously running open-air cinema showing solely Lotte Reiniger films, the programme being selected by the children. The toy theatres were housed in a cave and exquisitely lit, some of them being automated, the scenery changed by computer, and paper actors saying their lines from recorded tapes.

We were allowed to visit backstage to see the machinery of these wonders. A small baroque opera house was then visited within the castle itself. It is amazing that so many of these small theatres survive in spite of the violent history of 55 years ago. What a place to see *Così fan tutte* or *The Magic Flute*.

Upon our return to Stuttgart, after coffee, Dietger Dröse gave a short lecture on the Trensensky brothers, Joseph and Matthaus, the Viennese printers and designers of toy theatres and sheets (very collectable nowadays). It is usual at these gatherings to stimulate discussion by means of a debate, and at 9.30 the next morning two strong personalities, Robert Neumann and Per Brink Abrahamsem, were at friendly loggerheads. The subject was "Anachronistic Toy Theatre" (will television or games on disc be taken as a form of toy theatre?). No real conclusion seemed to be reached even after firm points of view had been expressed by the gathering. In Germany, at least, toy theatre has strong adherents who know that



it is a form of live theatre worth preserving. Thomas Klink, introduced by Christian Reuter, then gave a talk with slides describing his work as a museum restorer of careworn toy theatre sheets. Following this, a performance of Paul Hindemith's one-act comic opera *Nusch-Nuschi* was given. Hindemith was born in Hanau, Frankfurt, in 1895 and died there in 1963 (when the Nazis came to power his compositions were gradually banned as decadent, and he spent much time out of the country from then on, settling in America 1939-1953). It is therefore very appropriate that the Hanau Papiertheater, housed at Schloss Philippsruhe, should, under the direction of Dietger Dröse, have revived this important work. He and his colleagues are to be congratulated upon making the work come over so well within the small framework of toy theatre. With delightfully dream-like scenery and articulated figures by designer Helmut Wurz based upon the original performance of 1920, and well rehearsed, this toy theatre production had all the feel and surprise which must have greeted the original audiences. The performers were Helga Buttler, Ruth Dröse, and Holger Ludwig; sound and lighting by Frank Buttler.

Nusch-Nuschi is the middle section of a triptych of musical dramas (the first is based on Oskar Kokoschka's one-act play *Murder, Hope of Women*, 1907, the third on August Stramm's one-act opera *Sancta Susanna*, 1913). Based on Franz Blei's *Das Nusch-Nuschi, Play for Burmese Marionettes* (1904), it transfers seamlessly to the toy theatre in the version written by Ruth Dröse. *Nusch-Nuschi* is half alligator, half rat and is actually killed by the resourceful servant Tum tum in the first of the three scenes when the beast attacks the drunken Field Marshal

Kyce Waing. The cast also includes the "handsome Mr Zatwai," four amorous empresses, dancing girls, eunuchs, and trained apes. The field marshal ends up being wrongly accused of enjoying the favors of the emperor's wives and is sentenced to the "usual" punishment of castration, which cannot be carried out – *Nusch Nuschi* having already accomplished that during their brawl. Stylized, saucy, satirical, and humorous, the work lives up to its description of being "exuberant Burlesque." In recent years it has also enjoyed a revival in opera houses (see the *Viking Opera Guide* for more on Hindemith and the three musical pieces).

We continued the Symposium with the acting and analysis of *Die Weise Dame auf Schloss Avenel* (*The Wise Lady from Castle Avenel*). Vigorously led by Heinz Holland, this text, based upon Sir Walter Scott's *Guy Mannering*, came to life for about an hour, with everybody enjoying its Scottishness. The action takes place at the time of Mary Stuart and the plot is full of intrigue. There is a sinister castle, rumoured to be inhabited by a witch, which the steward wants to buy at auction. The steward has a ward, Anna, who knows the secret of the castle's treasure but does not reveal it to the steward, and who recognizes the officer who volunteers to come to the castle in place of a summoned tenant as in reality the last count of Avenel. She makes him buy the castle in the auction and he – out of gratitude – marries her. The end. It is interesting that the first two publications of Sir Walter Scott, who knew several European languages, were translations from German, including Goethe's play *Götz von Berlichingen* (1799). The Gothic element in Scott's work is said to be due to this early interest in contemporary

German literature. So we have an interesting exchange here.

On that Saturday evening we all retired to a local Greek restaurant and – what is fast becoming a tradition – the English provided a short entertainment. Percy Press and I in *Neuruppin* (1995), and Sylvia and I in two short toy theatre plays (figures and scenery by me), taken, with very little alteration, from a famous guide on how to speak instant German. I gave them the titles *On the Street* and *Das Kleine Taxi*.

I was very pleased with the reception, in that this little show demonstrated fully the colour, flexibility, and strengths of toy theatre and just how, with a little imagination, an unusual source material can provide humorous entertainment for 25 people (albeit for only 15 minutes) in a Greek restaurant in a side street off the Uhlanstraße in Stuttgart.

Sunday was a day of rest for the two of us while the rest of the delegates laboured with next year's venue. We managed to buy the last two tickets for the famous Friedrichsbau Cabaret and, settling back at our table with our cups of tea to watch the heartwarming acts on that Sunday evening, we were not so far away from the ethereal world of toy theatre and *Nusch-Nuschi*.

Hope this has whetted your appetite for puppetry's "kid brother." If so, The Festival of New Model Theatre and Traditional Toy Theatre at The Wish Tower Puppet Museum in Eastbourne, East Sussex, is the place to be 24, 25, & 26 October 1997. The festival will feature leading performers from Britain and the Continent, including Peter Baldwin, George Speaight, Barry Clarke, Robert Poulter, and Paul Edward in shows for adults and children plus exhibitions and workshops.

Have heard a particularly good report of Paul Edward's *Ubu Roi*. I am informed that Dietger Dröse and many continental colleagues will be visiting the event. Contact Robert Poulter, 7 St Augustine's Rd, Ramsgate, Kent CT11 9PQ; tel 01843 850002.

Belgium

Firstly, I should just like to say that it was a very pleasant surprise to meet Georges Vettters (from Liège) and Freek Neirynck (from Ghent) – last seen at the UNIMA Congress in Budapest – and his wife, Bénédicte, at the Covent Garden May Fayre, where we all hope to meet up again in 1998 as part of the twinning. Secondly, this was going to be a three-part conclusion to our trip to Belgium. John Phillips and Ray DaSilva kindly agreed to write technical articles – that not being my forte at all – and I would try to fill in some of the gaps. However, for reasons of space and balance, my contribution will be held over until the next issue. Lastly, for your information, Charleville will include an exhibition of Flemish puppets and masks.

A La Tringle

John Phillips

One of the joys of the recent trip to Belgium was the opportunity it provided to see several different techniques of manipulation. People who are strangers to traditional Belgian puppetry often find it difficult to understand how a marionette can be satisfactorily manipulated with only one metal rod to the head, which is Belgian puppetry at its most basic. That is because they are expecting that the intention will be to move the puppets in a lifelike way, but traditional Belgian marionettes are no more lifelike in their manipulation than that of the figures in our own Punch and Judy.

The standard way of walking a marionette that has only one rod to the head is to thump it or bounce it along the boards of the stage, thus making the body jerk with some semblance of life. For even greater animation the rod is also twisted from side to side so that the head appears to be looking around and the arms and legs swing about. So far the level of manipulative skill is not far removed from the sort of movement range a child can achieve with its doll.

When Tchantchès is involved in fights, as the puppet hero of Wallonia he rushes at his opponents and kicks them or sometimes even



doubles up and butts them with his head. In order to do this the rod must be connected at the top of the head rather than at the base of the neck, and, as the figure is fairly stiffly jointed, it can bend over in the middle. The wire to the head isn't always rigid either. It can even be kinked, spring-like, to give the figure extra bounce in its movement.

Sometimes the puppeteer will hold two or more figures in one hand, and during battles perhaps four or five figures in each hand will be thumped together in mid air. If a figure's sword hand is rigidly bent at the elbow it can hold its sword hand in an attacking position all the time, but another method is to suspend the sword by a chain at its waist so that when flung about in battle it flies up in the air as if being wielded with great vigour.

Some people have the idea that because Belgian puppets hang from a rod the performances must be rather static, but anyone who has seen a good performance at Liège will know how untrue this is. Adrien Dufour, who used to perform at the theatre of the Musée de la Vie Wallonne in Liège,

made his figures literally somersault before crashing to their death upon the stage.

When a lot of figures are required on stage at once a number of them can be simply hooked over the top of the backboard or the tops of the wings.

The standard method of manipulation at the Toone theatre in Brussels is slightly more complicated in that the hands are controlled by a second rod or string. The legs work on the pendulum principle. Another difference at Toone, where the hero is Woltje, is that there are a number of manipulators and instead of working the figures within a narrow slot of stage space (with the manipulator standing behind the backboard) the figures are worked from the sides of the stage as well and make use of the full depth of the stage. The dialogue at Toone is spoken by Toone VII, José Géal, and not the manipulators, whereas in Liège the often sole manipulator usually does all the voices himself. The Toone method of performance is much closer to that of Sicily and tends toward a more elaborate scenic effect.

The simplicity of means of manipulation in traditional Belgian puppetry has much to commend it to those involved with teaching, community work or therapy. Should you think about following suit in your own performances with the attendant opportunity to concentrate on a whole range of other production values? The apparent childlike simplicity of Belgian puppetry is attractive in itself and induces an imaginative response from spectators. Have we in Britain overemphasized the need for high levels of technical manipulative expertise?

It is hoped that it will be possible to invite several Belgian companies to come to Britain as part of our twinning arrangement with Belgian UNIMA and this will enable everyone to see for themselves what can be achieved with such simple means.

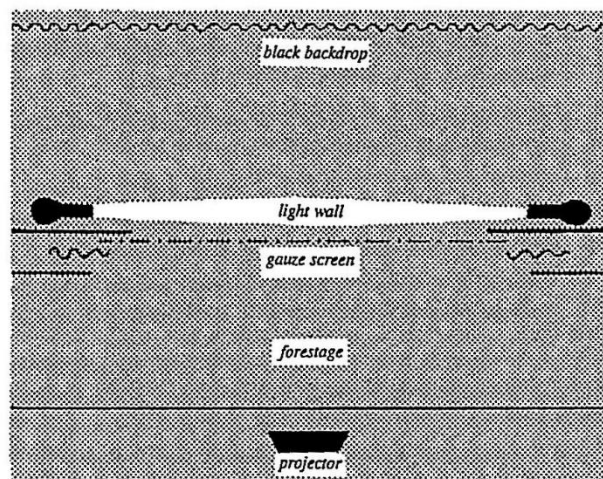
Mechelen Mechanics (As recalled by) Ray DaSilva

Most of us are familiar with “black theatre,” a term which embraces the magician’s cabinet lined with black velvet and with bright lights (blinders) on the outside, ultra-violet techniques, and also the “light wall,” which has become more popular these days as lighting equipment has become more efficient. We also know about the use of gauze for theatrical transformation scenes; but the combination of black theatre and gauze, although documented in many places, is less familiar. This combination provided the technical basis for the production of *Alice and Alice in Wonderland* at the Mechels Stadspoppentheater, witnessed by the BrUNIMA puppetourists on the recent trip to Belgium.

There were two live actors – a modern Alice, and a male animal-rights activist, who had plenty of opportunities to protest, for example, at the treatment of the dormouse, hedgehogs, and flamingos. They performed in front of a huge, soft-sculptured computer, the screen of which was covered (but not obviously so) with a stretched sharks-tooth gauze, which served as a screen for a video projector downstage. This was used for the projection of scenery, which often travelled with the puppets operated behind the screen. All this was combined with the usual stage mechanics such as flying scenery to give an effect of superb technical accomplishment.

The screen was (from memory) about 4m wide and 2.5m high; the puppeteers operated the puppets (sometimes held by black tongs) behind this screen in a narrow “light wall” produced by lights top, bottom, left and right. Each luminaire was fitted with a long (about 60cm) snoot to prevent light spill.

The puppets were mostly operated “in space,” which suited the dreamy storyline, but when they were required to “feel their feet,” a transparent shelf was swung into a



horizontal position just below the bottom of the screen.

This was made from a long framed strip of clear plastic and therefore did not interfere with the illumination from below. The combined effect of the puppets behind the screen with the video projections from the front was rather like a 3D film. The puppets were more brightly lit than the scenery, and this gave the impression that the puppets were in front of it rather than behind. The two media married so well, that some of our party were completely mystified as to how the effects were achieved: one asked a colleague during the interval “When are we going to see some puppets?” – thinking that everything so far had been on film.

During the second half of the programme, the technique became a little more obvious, especially in the croquet game when flexible playing-card characters occasionally cast shadows on themselves when they were close to the lights at the side of the stage.

The BrUNIMA party will remember the visit with pleasure, both for the performance, the tour backstage, and the delightful welcome given to us by Louis and Paul Contryn, the artistic forces behind the theatre.

See also:

Coad, Luman. *Black Theatre* (no date)
Kersten, Ralph. *Schwarzes Theater* (1996).
Kodicek, Susan. *Black Theatre for Children* (1977).
Pawelke, Rainer. *Schwarzes Theater aus der Traumfabrik* (1995).

As promised in the last issue, Anna Ingleby, who is studying the performing arts in Java, has sent material for publication. By agreement among Anna, Glyn Edwards, and me, one article will be published in *Animations* and two in the *Bulletin*. The first one published here features someone who is, I can assure you, as Anna says, highly unorthodox in the *wayang* community of Java.

***Pak Sukasman: Pondok Seni
Wayang, Yogyakarta
Anna Ingleby***

Pak (Su)Kasman is the son of a batik factory owner, and now 64 years old. He is thinly built and has wispy white hair, but his eyes stay young for the world of *wayang kulit*. He rides everywhere in Yogyakarta, Central Java, on his bicycle and lives by himself in his old family house, which he has converted into a small theatre and continues to renovate.

Pak Kasman's interest in wayang began as a child, and long ago he started making his own designs. He became interested in the original beliefs of Java, some of which are still incorporated in the religions which later followed and dominated – first Hinduism and now Islam.

He finished his official study of graphic design (which included many different media) in 1962 and moved to Jakarta. In 1964 he was included in a team of 15 artists chosen to design interiors for the New York World Fair. It was planned that they would stay two years there, but due to Indonesia's war with Malaysia the time was cut short. Instead of going home, Pak Kasman went to the Netherlands. At first he worked in the Indonesian Embassy in The Hague, but after this he had a job washing dishes. Throughout that time he continued his studies in Art and improved his language skills. Whenever possible he visited collections of *wayang*, and he developed many graphic symbols as a hobby. He also read a lot about Western (as well as

Javanese) philosophy and began to find many common areas. He continued life drawing and worked a lot from the *Famous Artists' Course Book*. He then had a job for 5 years as a designer for displays in a department store, and during this time continued to develop his *wayang* designs and experimented with proportions. He was in the Netherlands for a total of 8½ years, and had one exhibition there before he returned to Yogyakarta in 1974. Since then he has worked in his house making *wayang kulit*, mostly bought by tourists

Since his mother died four years ago, his house has been under constant renovation. His stage has wooden wings with his designs carved into them, and his very thin shadow screen and coloured lighting system allow him to illuminate paintings on the rear wall so that they appear as a ghostly image through the screen.

Pak Kasman has written seven stories, six of which have been televised. They are based on tradition, but are also influenced by different philosophies which he has studied. He has also developed new designs for traditional leather head-dresses, many of which are on display in the seating area of his theatre – along with various drawings, diagrams, philosophical quotations and graphic symbols which he has accumulated and presented on display boards.

His theatre is only part-formed. When he has no show it becomes his studio. Walking into it feels like entering an ancient, dusty, secret place. Sometimes there might be two or three artists working away in some corner – punching the leather for a *wayang* or carving another piece of wood for a stage wing or a door lintel. On the cement floor one might see designs for the latest *wayang*: using chalk saves Pak Kasman having to buy paper. He maintains a very low-cost lifestyle so that he can spend all his money on his theatre and *wayang* – or paying his artists. He sleeps on a mat on the stage, with only



his gamelan instruments as company at the stage-left side of the room, slightly separate from the main space. However in the runup to a show there could be up to 40 artists around the place, if all the musicians, visual artists, and performers are included.

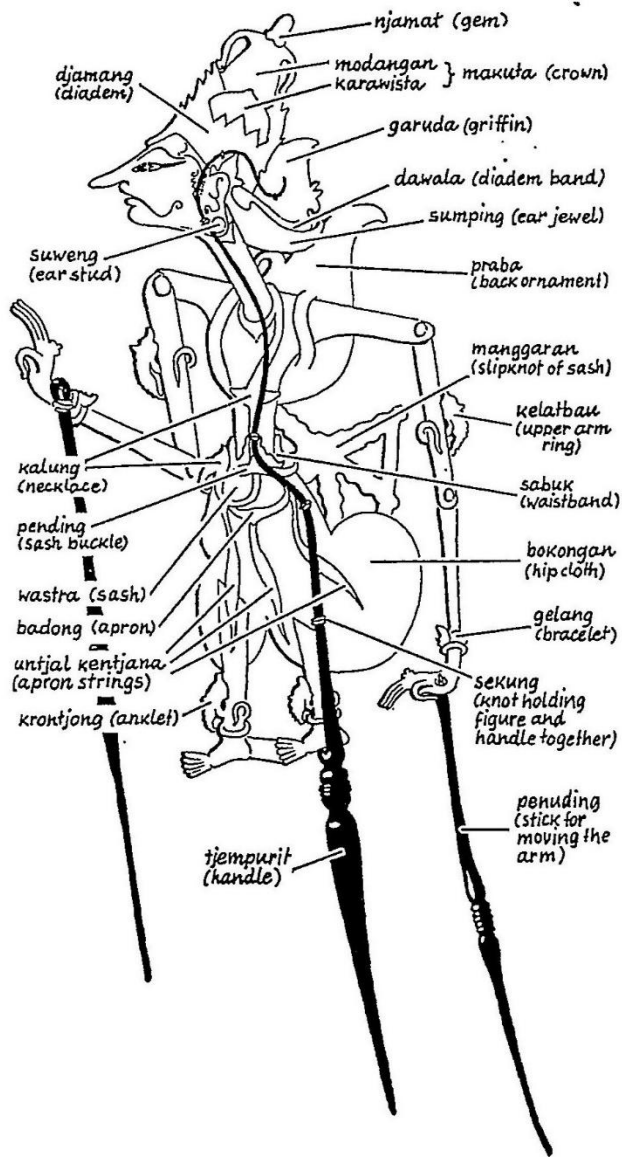
Pak Kasman has never married, partly due to financial reasons, and in a way he has made himself an exile because he does not follow the conventional path of most people in the *wayang* world. He continues to experiment with *wayang* proportions and different methods of presentation, drawing from Western knowledge, technology and philosophy as well as the Javanese, which he believes he must guard and continue to develop.

Pak Kasman's shows do not (so far) happen very frequently. So far they have been especially for tourist groups and might consist of an explanation of Pak Kasman's *wayang* designs followed by some short scenes from one of his stories – like a demonstration of different techniques. The show finishes with some traditional Yogyanese dancing (using Pak Kasman's head-dresses) on the stage in front of the screen. A female and male *halus* or “refined” character-dance is followed by a male *gagah* or “rough” character. After this, one of the dancers explains some of the dance techniques, and the audience are then allowed to wander around and ask questions before leaving. Alternatively, Pak Kasman sometimes stages a full-length story lasting two - three hours.

Very simply speaking, Pak Kasman analysed the following rules of *wayang* proportion (which one day, it is to be hoped, he will publish with full explanations and the necessary diagrams):

- The upper part of the body is considered as more important, therefore the shoulders are always wide. This is partly to do with the image on the screen and how the wayang is held against it: the upper half is always clearer.
- The neck inclines forward in a way not natural for realistic proportions.
- There is always a good width between the legs.
- The limbs are often thin so that they are clearly distinguishable from each other.
- The upper body faces forward to allow the arms to have clear movement and the shoulders to be extended.
- The neck meets the oval of the head in a different place from where it would in naturalistic proportions.
- Longer arms allow clearer movement. (They seem more important than the legs – perhaps because they are used so much during dialogue).
- If a line is drawn from the tip of the nose to the back of the head, this is more horizontal in the *wayang*, and the nose is broader.
- The forward inclination of the head means that the shoulder at the back is extended to create compositional balance.
- This in turn means that decoration is needed behind the head and behind the back to maintain this compositional balance.
- The character of the *wayang* is depicted by its stance (refined or rough etc) and its features (e.g. thin eyes, or round athletic eyes).

Pak Kasman also makes transparent colourful *wayang*, similar to the techniques of Indian leather puppet making. Pak Kasman's real strength is in visual arts, and he does not operate his puppets himself. He explains his principles of *wayang* proportion to the audience, and then becomes one of the lighting operators. I once heard that *dalangs* might not favour his designs because they are difficult to operate with traditional techniques; but it could be argued that new techniques too could be found so that the tradition can progress in more ways than one.



The first show which I saw at his theatre, back in October, had three *dalangs*, two behind the screen and one in front. The next show I was able to see was on 23 March, when there was just one *dalang* each side of the screen. On both occasions many exciting effects were produced by the use of front and back lighting, also using coloured light. For me the most effective moments happened whenever a motif on the rear wall could be seen simultaneously with the images both sides of the screen – the character on the front having gold leaf which shone brightly with the minimum of front light. In the October show three scenes were selected from a longer story. Loads of demons were included, and Arjuna and some clowns, plus lots of fighting. In the recent show a whole story (heavily shortened) was shown, again with many dramatic moments, and dramatic incidental music provided by the gamelan.

I believe that Pak Kasman might now be staging his performance more or less once a month for tourist groups, although I understand that he is developing more links with tourist offices so this may, I hope, increase. The most recent show I saw generally had a smoother flow to it, although there is room for improvement regarding the English explanations. The synopsis of the story needed to be briefer and be read out more distinctly (if it needs to be read out at all), and the explanations about *wayang* design could have been much more clear and concise. The most important improvement would be to make it crystal clear to the audience right from the start as to how this work is actually highly innovative within its context, and how it is taking tradition one step further, allowing it to grow and develop.

The venue which Pak Kasman has created in his house is not like anything else that can be found in Yogyakarta. The potential is enormous for collaborations with other artists, other puppets, and other theatre forms. As yet even the effect of dancers appearing ghost-like (or god-like) behind the screen is under-used. I hope very much that in the coming weeks, months, and years Pak Kasman will be able to share the creative direction of his theatre with other artists – particularly from the field of drama (of which there are many exponents in Yogyakarta) – so that some truly innovative theatre can be produced. Within this the tradition of *wayang kulit* can still survive and grow to further heights (after all, *wayang kulit* in its purest traditional form is not in short supply, and as such is not at risk). If so, Pondok Seni Wayang (Wayang Art House) could effectively become the only (much needed!) studio theatre in Yogyakarta, and continue to be so in the years to come. However, if Pak Kasman prefers to continue with his own ideas only, I would still recommend Pondok Seni Wayang as a very worthwhile place for many people to visit and I wish him the best of luck for the future.

Shadowlands

Reading's three-day Womad Festival will include, among 20-plus acts, on Sunday 27 July, the South Bank Gamelan Players & Javanese Puppeteers. They will perform the classical gong music of Asia with special performances by Javanese shadow puppetmasters Slamet Gundono and Antonius Wahyudi. Womad ticket line 0118 939 0930.

The following day the Royal Festival Hall hosts, from 10.30 am on, a free event called Dance the Gamelan. "Join an amazing group of dancers and musicians from Indonesia for a day with the beautiful bronze instruments of the gamelan culminating in a stunning Wayang shadow performance in association with the South Bank Gamelan Players." Ring 0171 960 4242 for further details.

Given the intimate connection between gamelan and *wayang*, gamelan publications quite often carry articles on puppets. "Wayang Puppets. A spotter,s Guide," by Tim Byard-Jones, appeared in *Seleh Notes* (successor to *Pelog*), the UK Gamelan Network Newsletter, Vol 4 No 1 Nov 96. Just 2½ pages, but a useful, illustrated introduction, nonetheless, for *wayang* tyros by the *dalang* of the Kidang Kencana Golden Deer Shadow Company, who employs English dialogue with narration and mood songs in Javanese. At least one music course specifically to accompany wayang has recently been held in this country. The last two issues of *Seleh* have contained a continuing, anecdotal account of "Pete Smith's adventures in wayangland." A recentish issue of an American gamelan publication, *Balungan*, contained articles on *wayang golek*.

The BrUNIMA Annual Lecture: Not Penny Plain

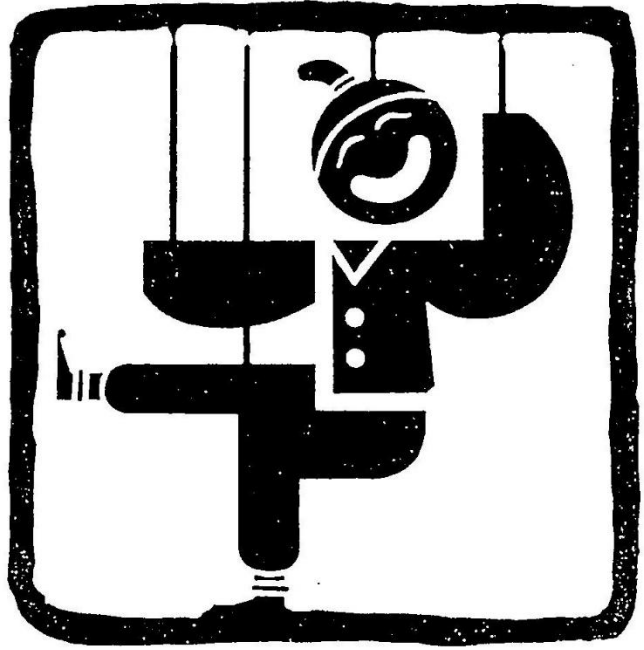
Just under 40 of us gathered on The Puppet Barge, at its Little Venice moorings, 3 May, to enjoy the Middletons' hospitality (Gren was the initiator of the idea of an annual lecture) and to hear Penny Francis, tutor at the Central School of Speech and Drama, deliver this year's BrUNIMA Annual Lecture, *The Rise of the Puppeteer: A Look at the Historical Role of the Performer-Puppeteer*.

Even after regretfully restricting her geographical range to Europe, the temporal sweep of 2,500-plus years produced a rich vein of material, which, as she acknowledged, would require a whole series of lectures to mine. The main focus of the talk was on those who "move the puppets," charting their social and creative ascent from pre-Antiquity to the present. It is part of the thesis that there was a functional split between the presenter out front, whether shaman/priest or showman/entrepreneur, and those who worked the puppets, and that it was not until quite late, perhaps the 18th century, that "the showman entered the booth and became the operator or one of the operators." From the earliest times, invisible, anonymous performers, sometimes trained, sometimes not, suffered very low status (in contrast to the presenters and producers of the puppet shows): "But there is no doubt from everything written about the players of puppets right up to the sixteenth century that they were considered a pretty low bunch, socially speaking. In fact, the movers of the puppets were rated in Spain as the lowest of all the court and popular entertainers... 'in the most vile class, we may read, *cazurreos*, persons who neither speak nor sing, but train animals, monkeys, goats and dogs, and who handle puppets'" – that was in 1273.

The influence of the highly professional theatre of Commedia dell'Arte, requiring

greater skills, the importance and subsequent higher status attached to folk art by Romanticism, the arts and crafts movement, modernism, the great Obraztsov, and semiotics are all logged in the survey of the puppeteer's development, culminating in a situation today where five categories of "great performer-puppeteers" may be identified briefly as follows: 1) "creative artists of live theatre, professionally trained in some field of plastic art or design, who have mastered, through example and practice, but rarely through training in schools, the techniques of operating the puppets themselves"; 2) "the perpetuators of old traditions"; 3) "the puppeteers of the streets and pubs and fairs and folk festivals who have taken comedy improvisation to the level of an art form"; 4) "performers in cabaret and variety"; and 5) "performers [who] work mostly in television, and have taken live performance with puppets to new levels of professionalism." (The audience included at least one self-confessed "didicoy" who has held out against the transition from the hairy to the smooth.) All this enables Penny Francis to draw a conclusion which is "rather an optimistic one. The work of the puppeteer-performer has certainly, over the centuries, become more interesting and demanding and ABOVE ALL creative."

This is a mere bird's-eye view – as the crow flies – of the terrain covered. However, we do hope to provide you quite soon with a large-scale map in the form of the printed lecture (together with the previous Annual Lecture, by Professor Henryk Jurkowski), which will enable you to enjoy the local detail and take in the landmarks at your leisure, and, perhaps, take issue with some of the "deductions," the "we have to guess," and the "I suspect," which necessarily accompany such a long voyage. You will, nevertheless, lack – in large part – the host of sometimes unfamiliar illustrations chosen to underpin the words, but that, apart from the social side of it, is why it is better to attend



8th Seoul Puppet Festival

Tom Herbert

In January I received an invitation from Mr Ahn, director of the Seoul Puppet Theatre, to perform at the 8th Seoul Puppet Festival – 22-25 May. This came through the kind invitation of Stan Parker, who has performed at previous festivals, and is a good friend of Mr Ahn.

Mr Ahn was willing to pay for me and another person. Unfortunately, my wife was unable to go, but eventually – through the good offices of Penny Francis – I was accompanied by Alison McGowan, a student at the Central School of Speech and Drama.

I did a traditional English Punch and Judy in my lightweight booth. Alison assisted in setting and striking the booth, and mediated between the puppets and the audience. She had only one rehearsal, but quickly picked up the spontaneous thread of the interactions. We performed twice daily throughout the festival, with a member of the Korean puppet team to interpret and explain the basic plot and tradition of Punch and Judy. The Korean audience was at first rather shocked at the violence, but loved the boxing match and other pieces of business.

Other companies represented were Teatro Mut, Mexico; Teatrong Mulat, the Philippines; Dream Puppets (Richard Hart), Australia; Babu Lal Bhatt's Amar Singh Rathore Puppet Theatre, India; the Takenoko Puppet Troupe, Japan; the Primorskiy Puppet Theatre, Russia; and Kidstuff Puppet Theatre, USA; as well as five Korean companies – the Piero Puppet Theatre, the Ha Young Hoon Puppet Company, the Rainbow Puppet Theatre, the Very Good Man Puppet Theatre, and the Kaegujaengyiee Puppet Troupe.

On two of the days we were billed with the Amar Singh Rathore Theatre, which gave an excellent performance of traditional Rajasthani marionettes, accompanied by music, singing, and tabla playing of a very high standard. One day we were billed with a Korean company, which performed a traditional Korean folk tale about how two children escaped the clutches of a tiger by becoming the sun and the moon. On the last day we enjoyed a performance of *Red Cap* by the Primorskiy Puppet Theatre from Russia's Maritime Kray, a refreshing version of the Red Riding Hood theme with delightful settings and songs designed to appeal to young children. Both the Korean and Russian companies used simple but effective table-top puppets.

Our hosts catered for our every need and we spent our last two nights as guests at Mr Ahm's house. We finally left on 28 May with warm regards and memories of Seoul.

Audrey Atterbury

Further to the notice in the May *Newsletter* on Audrey Atterbury, pioneer television puppeteer associated with *Andy Pandy* and *The Flowerpot Men*, who died in London on 8 April 1997, see also the *Tribute* by Lyndie Wright and Christopher Leith, *Animations*, June/July, and obituaries in *The Times* 23 4 97 and *The Independent* 16 4 97.

What I Did on My Holiday or How To Pull Strings in Your Home Town Rachel Riggs

Nigel Hanson, manager of Blackpool Town Centre Forum and myself met over a year ago to begin plans for **Puppet Up! 97 Blackpool's Festival of British Puppetry**. Nigel's brief was to have a large-scale festival to restore civic pride and attract visitors. He was already convinced that puppetry was the ideal artform for a community event, and with the help of David Thornton (an ex-puppeteer) from Black Marketing he concentrated on business sponsorship etc, while I set to, as artistic director, booking and organising the education and festival programme. The aim was to have as many North West puppeteers involved as possible with a balanced mix of national puppet companies. The core funding came from the Single Regeneration Budget and we added to this with Arts for Everyone, NWArts and Lancashire Council Arts funding as well as business sponsorship.

In the early days of planning I was pleasantly surprised to see how enthusiastic everyone seemed about the festival. I had expected some negative responses, knowing how people in my home town are, and how they have little interest in things that don't involve making money! However, as the window displays went up and posters & leaflets were distributed, people began to notice that the festival was going to happen and, better still, it was going to be free. Another surprise was meeting Desiree King, daughter of Dan Delvaine (Delvaine's Marionettes), who lives in the area, and seeing her original collection.

I felt that one of the most important aspects of the festival would be the education programme with puppeteers and artists, including Mandy Beck, David Mason, Mary Turner, Diana Bayliss, Jo Pocock, Mary

Walker, Alison McGowan, Adam Bennett, and Matt Smith. They would be working with over 12 different mainstream and special-needs schools and community organisations. Blackpool schools had never been involved in such a large education programme before and were eager for this kind of creative work. My idea was that the children's involvement in workshops for the festival parade would allow access to the children's relatives and friends, who would also become interested, and this seemed to work. Another important element was the involvement of the puppetry organisations: The Puppet Centre Trust, British UNIMA, The British Puppet and Model Theatre Guild, and the North West Puppetry Forum. Their involvement showed a focused solidarity in the promotion of the artform.

The countdown started with the opening of The Fantasy in Action exhibition at the Grundy Art Gallery, which provided the stimulus for the Education Programme. This had a record attendance on the festival Saturday, with over 1,000 people visiting. The publicity also began, with lots of radio interviews, features on Granada Tonight and Look North West and regular articles in the local press. Then came the calm before the storm, the phone stopped ringing for a day and we pored over lists of the many tasks still ahead which all needed to be allocated. But we had very little people power. So much to do and so little time! This was a worry, but in the end a crack commando team of 10, armed with walkie-talkies and Puppet Up! sweatshirts managed the weekend. Friends arrived to help and my family's house turned into a B&B for the weekend.

Suddenly, everyone was arriving for the Gala reception — Christine Glanville with Lady Penelope, Delvaine's Marionettes, Ray & Joan DaSilva, The Little Angel, the mayor & mayoress plus many more — and the festival began.

There was a delay in sales for the festival shows at the Grand Theatre Studio, but on the day the majority had full houses and satisfied audiences. In fact, the Studio had a record attendance and was fit to burst for Faulty Optic's *Shot at the Troff*. The Studio is a new space and is ideal for small-scale touring puppet theatre: Banyan's *Little Red Cap*, Indefinite Articles' *Pinocchio*, and Treasure Trove's *Rumplestiltskin* were all performed there during the festival. Also Doo Cot presented *Life's A Beach*, a special site-specific installation based on Blackpool images.

On Saturday morning, approximately 600 children, puppets of all shapes and sizes, and costumed characters all met for the Grand Parade of Puppets. The weather was fine, no wind or rain — which Blackpool is notorious for — dampened the excitement of the event. Everything was going well, the Chinese lions and Spanish Gigantes were ready to go, but the essential Manchester Samba School had yet to arrive! At a few minutes to start time the coach was spotted and they assembled to provide a magical audio accompaniment to the parade. It was wonderful to see the local morris men dance to samba instead of the traditional brass band! After the parade, the street theatre started, with crowds looking for entertainment. A few minor nightmares included Shelanagig — a performance group from Manchester — being hassled by drunks; Parachute Theatre Co being hassled by a local jeweller who thought they were going to take his trade away; and Creature Feature having their van broken into and essential nuts & bolts for their set stolen! The mind boggles!

Nevertheless, these minor problems faded with brilliant performances from all involved over the two days, including Green Ginger, Panic Puppets, Steve Wright, Chris Topper's Puppets, Whalley Range Allstars, Over the Top, Tom & Linda Herbert's Punch & Judy, Theatre Grotesque plus many more. The evening's DNA Cabaret at the Music Hall

Tavern was a bit of a shock to the performers and the visiting audience. I'd had this romantic notion of joining the past with the present in a traditional venue with new variety acts, but in reality the venue was very difficult both to perform and to watch in owing to the noise levels. Anyway, it was all character-building stuff, and the DNA Cabaret Ensemble took the challenge!

Sunday had an hour of heavy rain, which delayed the street theatre, and a few shows had to shuffle around to different sites. Mr Punch's birthday party, however, went without a hitch, and the cake soon disappeared. There was a change of venue for Green Ginger as too many difficulties had suddenly arisen at the North Pier, where they were to perform. Another minor nightmare sorted out, all thanks to everyone who climbed on to the roof of the Art Gallery to black out the skylight! *Slaphead*, Green Ginger's hilarious new show was performed in the evening to end the festival. Not surprisingly, I spent all Monday and Tuesday asleep before tidying everything up, happy but exhausted.

In the local paper a few days later a reader's letter gave the festival the best PR you could ask for. This person had enjoyed the parade and street theatre so much and no one had asked him for any money — he couldn't believe all this had happened in Blackpool!

Puppet Up! 99 Blackpool Festival of British Puppetry will be held in May for a week. Plans include an exhibition of the Delvaine Marionette Collection and performances in the main house of the Grand Theatre.

On behalf of Nigel Hanson and myself I would like to give a huge thank you to everyone who was involved in the festival and those who came to support it.

Prepare to Puppet Up! 99.

Hogarth

I am afraid that, despite Ray DaSilva's appeal in the *Newsletter*, no boy scout or girl guide volunteered to write a piece on puppets in William Hogarth's work, to mark the tercentenary of the painter's birth. That is a shame, given the inspiration provided by the excellent portrait and "dramatic" canvases shown at The Tate, and the Sir John Soane Museum's rakish offering, among many other celebratory events by no means restricted to the capital — although there is *nothing to stop* a contribution from someone to the next *Bulletin*. Meanwhile, a brief report on a current coupling of live puppetry and the artist.

In June 1996 I saw excerpts from a musical called *Hogarth*, performed in the Great Hall of St Bartholemew's Hospital in benefit of the now-reprieved hospital and the Thomas Coram Foundation for Children. The venue was particularly appropriate as Hogarth was a governor of Bart's and painted the huge murals in the North Wing depicting the parable of the Good Samaritan and Christ healing the sick at the pool of Bethesda; a very fine, affectionate, large-scale portrait of the self-made man, Captain Thomas Coram, was exhibited at The Tate show.

The musical, still in a formative stage and with major changes in personnel, has just had a week's run at London's Bridewell Theatre. The puppetry element of it presents a story "of courage, superstition, divine retribution and the sudden swiftness of this fleeting life" involving Lord Shorland, who, after accidentally killing a priest, obtains a pardon from Elizabeth I, impressing her with his derring-do when he rides two miles out to sea on his horse to petition her as she reviews the fleet. On his return to land, an old fortune-teller predicts that the horse will be the death of him. On the instant, Shorland stabs the horse to death. Walking along the beach some years later, he notices the horse's skull sticking out of the sand and kicks it,

causing a wound to his foot which becomes gangrenous and dispatches him within the week.

The pretext for this narrative is that Hogarth and chums, "The Five Knights of Shame," have set out from Gravesend on a carousing "pilgrimage" to the eccentric knight's grave on the Isle of Sheppey. The potential of such a bizarre tale is, as you might expect, well exploited by a team led by someone (John Phillips) whose company is known as Theatre Grotesque, employing "multi-coloured" shadows on precariously long poles. Janet Biggs remains of the original group, and Ken Standing has taken over from Adam Bennett. It is hoped that *Hogarth* will get another showcase run later in the summer as a possible prelude to a move into the West End. It is also hoped to expand the puppetry component.

António José da Silva

A Portuguese film entitled *The Jew*, directed by Jom Tob Azulay, has been made about the 18th-century playwright António José da Silva, who was burned at the stake by the Inquisition for professing Judaism. He wrote eight comic operas – all for puppets! Brief excerpts from these are shown in the film, which one critic has described as being "filmed in the rich, shadowy palette of Caravaggio paintings" (*New York Times*, 8 1 97).

I do not know whether the film will be shown here – it has had a New York art-house release – but anyone wanting to buff up his knowledge of this figure can turn to "An Introduction to the Life and Work of the Portuguese Writer António José da Silva, 1704-1739," by Penny Francis (which appears in *Present Trends in the Research of World Puppetry*, a collection of papers given at a UNIMA-organized conference in Warsaw in 1991 and edited by Marek Waszkiel). Penny Francis writes that he "is

nowadays considered one of Portugal's half dozen leading theatre writers, his plays are performed at the National Theatre in Lisbon, his works are examined and analysed by all students of Portuguese literature." Unfortunately, the translation into English of the five-hour-long *Esopaida* (*The Life of Aesop*) for John Phillips' company, which is mentioned in the essay, has not – for logistical and other reasons – been performed.

Forthcoming Events

UNIMA President Sirppa Sivori-Asp presents a special performance of *Faraway Land* (see last issue for details) for BrUNIMA members at Norwich Puppet Theatre, Sunday 17 August. This forms part of a festival featuring three Finnish companies held at the Norwich Puppet Theatre throughout August. Telephone 01603 629921 for limited (40) tickets and details.

The 11th World Festival of Puppet Theatre, Charleville-Mézières, 19-28 September 1997. Contact: Karen Dolet, Institut Internationale de la Marionnette, 7 Place Winston Churchill, 08000 Charleville-Mézières. Tel 03 24 59 94 94, Fax 03 24 56 05 10. It includes the usual impressive line-up of shows, exhibitions, and conferences, including an intriguing one on puppets and prison.

The Rafi Peer Theatre Workshop has sent information on the IV International Puppet Festival Pakistan, which will take place in Lahore 17-27 October 1998. The selection policy of the "UNIMA-monitored" festival, which is devoted to peace, international solidarity, and acceptance of cultural differences, is "quite open... all forms and styles of puppetry from traditional to modern." The festival, is held at one central

site, featuring 242 shows over the 11 days plus exhibitions, workshops, masterclasses etc. The festival will cover all hospitality costs, which includes all meals, hotel stay, local transportation, sightseeing tours. Further details, including application form, available from Lorraine von Gehlen.

Lady Penelope, Scott Tracey, and other characters from *Thunderbirds* will be making guest appearances at member Mel Myland's Wish Tower Puppet Museum, Eastbourne, during *Airbourne '97*, which takes place 14-17 August. There will also be models of *Thunderbirds* craft, a display of 1960s merchandise and publicity material, plus puppets and other attractions from Gerry Anderson's many television series, including *Captain Scarlet*, *Joe 90*, and *Terrahawks*. Long-time puppeteer Christine Glanville, who worked for Gerry Anderson for 40 years, will be in attendance along with members of Fanderson, the official Gerry Anderson Appreciation Society.

Contact Mel Myland, The Puppet Workshop, 38 Grove Rd, Eastbourne BN21 4TY; tel 01323 417776.

Incidentally, "Thunderbirds are go – again" was the title of a half-page spread in *The Indy* (4 6 97). Working Title, the production company responsible for, among other films, *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, is in search of a human cast for the 32-year-old Anderson vehicle. The net for Lady Penelope is being cast pretty wide, names mentioned include Julie Christie, Kristin Scott Thomas, Nicole Kidman, Elizabeth Hurley (a distant outsider), and my favourite – *de gustibus...* – Sharon Stone, who is keen, apparently, to play a comic role. I also learn that Anrika Rice once did a passable Lady P in a TV comedy sketch. As for the five Tracy boys, the four Baldwin brothers (Alec, the one everyone knows, Daniel, William, and Stephen plus a ringer) would seem to be naturals. Could the Tracy lads have been

modelled, no matter how distantly, on the five heroic Pandava brothers of the *Mahabharata*? *Thunderbirds* is expected to go into production in 1998 with a release the following year, so get your much-sought-after Tracy Island model or Blue Peter do-it-yourself version out now and start rehearsing International Rescue.

Information has been received that Arts Worldwide Ltd (World Circuit Arts) proposes an extensive Festival of Thailand here in the summer of 1998. The *Bulletin* will keep you posted. For the moment, we merely report that they would hope to bring over a fairly big rod/shadow puppet company and complement the performances with educational work for schools and masterclasses for puppeteers. The whole would centre around a weekend "folk festival," with performances, displays, crafts, music, and Thai cuisine.

Training Course

DNA, the Puppet Centre Trust, the Little Angel, and BAC will be organizing a series of 10 three-hour workshops for puppeteers conducted by specialist tutors in London in September, October, and November. Please send SAE to Development Workshops for Puppeteers c/o The Puppet Centre, BAC.

International Database for Puppet Theatre Design

Simon Palmer

I have been asked to compile a database of puppet theatre designers and makers for the Scenography Department of the University of Central England in Birmingham. The research will be international in scope but with a specific emphasis on British artists. The main criterion for any information on the database is its usefulness to practical and academic research, it will be used and

(hopefully) be continually updated by post-graduate and, to a certain extent, under-graduate students.

The database will include material on Contemporary Practitioners (freelance designers, designers for specific companies and puppeteers for whom design informs a significant part of their practice), 20th Century Precedents (major work between 1900 and the 1950s), National Theatres and Centres, National Puppetry Organizations (with an indication of the organisation's strategies/support for design), and National Training Provision (specifically regarding puppet design and scenography). It is envisaged that most categories will include photographic material.

There will also be a bibliography and information compiled on puppet types and production techniques, parallel techniques (automata, kinetic sculpture, object-related performance, etc), making techniques, materials and tools.

I would be glad to hear from anyone interested in this research and, indeed, anyone who could offer appropriate information that I might miss (I will pay for photocopying, postage, etc). Inevitably the University is also developing internet connections, a permanent web-site and/or an interrogatable CD Rom for scenographic studies; there is interest in incorporating UNIMA material.

Perhaps British UNIMA could create its own database or slide index of national and international designers' work for puppet theatre, to be used by both the membership and the general public. If this sounds like a good idea, please let me know and I'll put it to the committee.

Contact: Simon Palmer at Church Studios, Common Road, Stafford ST16 3EQ. Telephone 01785 226326 or fax 01785 220460.

Internet

The latest (June) Committee meeting decided that we should share a web site with the Guild and the Puppet Centre Trust and that this be looked after by Ted Beresford, with Rachel Riggs liaising for BrUNIMA. During the interim, BrUNIMA information will be posted on The Puppetry Home Page (www.sagecraft.com/puppetry/), which is well worth visiting, anyway.

The following item is owed to PINZ UNIMA's magazine, *gesture*. Mary Sutherland was funded by the Australia Council to attend last year's UNIMA Congress and Festival in Budapest. Her Artistic Report on it, including photographs, has been posted on the Internet at Joe Sutherland's homepage <<http://www.ozemail.com.au/~jbs1528/ArtisticReport.html>>

Mary is suggesting a Virtual UNIMA Centre for Australia or homepage on an Internet Service Provider. Before anyone says "Impossible, I don't even have a computer," she points out that there are Internet cafés sprouting up all over the world, as well as services provided by schools and local libraries, specifically to serve the needs of the "technologically disenfranchised."

It was reported in our press that Aardman Animation has received orders worth more than £200,000 since its Wallace and Gromit site was set up on the Internet World Wide Web in 1995.

"The lot is fallen unto me in a fair ground"

Member Anna Markus, who trained at the Hungarian State Puppet Theatre and has worked in Manchester for 17 years in puppetry in education, informs the *Bulletin* that her company, Anna Markus Puppets, Theatre of Jewish Art, has received National

Lottery (The Arts for Everyone Express Grant) cash for its production of the *Tale of Jonah*. The maximum award of £5,000 possible under the scheme will enable the company to take its mobile theatre to all parts of the North West. The first performance of *Jonah* will be in early 1998. "The company produces puppet plays for Jewish and non-Jewish audiences. Their plays look at Jewish culture and wisdom through history, legend and humour. The aim of the company is education through enjoyment, and to create a better understanding between different communities."

The Keswick Young Voices singing group – 40 youngsters from 8-12 years old – has received a £2,600 Lottery grant to commission a vocal work from Lynn Marsh based on the folk tale of Tom Hickathrift, a Fenland giant fighter buried in Terrington St Clement. The group is collaborating with Norwich Puppet Theatre to include puppetry in the performance scheduled for Norwich in early 1998.

BrUNIMA Treasurer John Phillips has also put in an application for us under the A4E scheme with a view to a project called Festival of British and Belgian Puppetry, which is to be held in and around London and Birmingham next Easter. It will consist of performances and workshops by Belgian and British puppeteers and be directed at aspiring professionals/amateurs/teachers/community workers, and the general public.

Over half a dozen companies which use puppets, including DNA Cabaret, are recipients of awards in the first round of the A4E scheme.

New Members

We are pleased to welcome:

Brian Davey: Punch and Judy professor, puppet workshops, lectures, artist/craftsman, professional puppetmaker, modelmaker, illustrator.

Helen Fry, London: small fry.

Christopher Paris, Brighton: woodwind repair and restoration, research, and education.

Lizzie Philps, Cirencester: education, therapy, and research; teaching English as a foreign language; speaks French and German.

Oily Cart: work for young people with severe learning disabilities and the very young; small-scale touring and theatre-based work for children – video and live music.

Housekeeping

The name of the Glasgow Centre is now Scottish Mask and Puppet Theatre Centre, not Scottish Mask and Puppet Centre, as I wrote in the last issue. The centre has had a theatre since I've known it.

Ideally, copy sent to me should be cleanly typed and **not double spaced** (otherwise the optical scanner does all kinds of weird things to it). However, the important thing is to send material even if it has to be retyped – I would much prefer something on the back of an envelope than nothing at all.

The **deadline** for the **Newsletter** is **23 August** and for the **Bulletin**, **1 October**.

British Centre of Union Internationale de la Marionnette

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